



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

## LETTERS TO PROMINENT PERSONS.

---

### No. IV.—To SAMUEL J. RANDALL, M.C.

SIR: There is nothing in your life, character, or capacity to justify a record other than that found on the ordinary stone of a country grave-yard. Having said that you were an affectionate husband, kind father, and estimable citizen, the truth of history would be exhausted ; and yet to-day you are one of the most remarkable figures of a political arena that covers a continent and includes in numbers some sixty millions of people.

The continuous representative of a navy-yard in Congress from a State that boasts of one great man, and that man an importation, you have never uttered a sentence which a thoughtful mind would read with interest, or care to remember, and have never advocated, let alone introduced a measure, that had in it a shadow of policy or the remotest suggestion of a principle. And yet, you stand to-day the truest leader, if I may use that word in such connection, of a party that for half a century controlled our government. You are fit to hold such prominence in either party. You are the embodiment of American politics, the central figure of the apotheosis of political commonplace, an animated platitude that emblems all platitudes.

On this account I am justified in devoting a few paragraphs to you, in a thoughtful, dignified Review. These paragraphs are not prompted nor influenced by any personal feeling. We are strangers to each other, and I am not aware that at any time in our lives we have crossed each other's paths. If there is a tone of censure in what I write, it originates in my regard for the situation, and not from any ugliness toward the representative, who is, in no respect, responsible for what I condemn.

You were born, Mr. Randall, some hundred years since, of the fathers of the government, when they undertook the impossible,

for finite minds, in an effort to make a written constitution, and legislate in that direction for all time to come. You are the net product and final upshot of that attempt, and you stand before us not in the light of a man, but of an institution. The notion suggests itself to the thoughtless that, if true, this is the most remarkable instance of a mountain's labor, and a mouse's birth, ever recorded. But it is not correct. The so-called mouse is the greatest evil with which we have to contend in this degenerate day of decline and fall.

How you came to be a possibility so disagreeable is found in the history of our government.

When the patriotic fathers undertook the impossible, they were embarrassed by a great fear that added to their difficulty. In creating a government that was to be exclusively for the benefit of the governed—in making, in Lincoln's words, "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people," they were haunted by a dread of the people, and sought to create a political structure that would be safe from the people themselves. The old style of government, recognized by the Almighty—for there is no republic in heaven—and practiced by Satan, not only in his own dominions but on earth, making one class control and, to a certain extent, own the other, had proved, in some degree, a success, upon the principle that it is easier for one man to govern another than it is for him to govern himself. The fathers were wise in their generation, and saw that all they gained in liberality they were likely to lose in stability and force, and so they sought to give to the office the power theretofore held by a class, and make the official a representative and servant of the people governed.

The subtle distinction was too nice for the comprehension of the masses taken into their confidence, and so difficult of execution that it failed of practical success from the beginning. The fathers, while fearing the impulses of the people, built too much on their virtue and intelligence, and, much as they relied on these, in their timidity they left very little to the discretion of the governed. Seeking to make the government solid, they made it immovable. It is cast-iron from end to end. They gave us an Executive elected every four years. Now an election means, if it means anything, an expression of the popular will, through the ballot. That this expression should occur only every four years is an absurdity. For any changes in the popular will, in the mean time, there is no provision

made. The result is that, after the exciting selection of Chief Magistrate, and the chief is inaugurated, the people may swing from under him to another side, but their Executive remains for four years. He cannot be touched save by death, or impeachment upon charges of malfeasance. Out of respect for the colonial superstition of chartered rights that grew into State sovereignty, a House of Lords, called a Senate, was created, as the half of our legislative departments that represents States alone, and the members of which hold office for the term of six years. To contend against these they gave us one democratic feature in a House of Representatives, that, against the veto power of both the Senate and executive, is, and has ever been, utterly helpless. Nay, as the government developed, the House became an humble dependence on the Executive. The result is a form of government called republican, that is further removed from popular control than any despotism of Europe.

The fathers meant well. It was their intention that the cast-iron Executive should be colorless. The incumbent, selected through an intricate and subtly arranged electoral college, was intended to be above all faction, and remain through his term of four years, the Chief Magistrate of all the people, executing such laws as Congress might pass with calm impartiality. This arrangement lasted intact through the administration of George Washington, and after that went rapidly to pieces. From a government of the people we passed to that of a party until the administration of Andrew Jackson, when Secretary Marcy's axiom that said, "to the victors belong the spoils" overrode all the wise saws of the framers, and left our government as it is to-day, one of parties and not of the people, in which the unhappy minority finds it has no rights that the party in power is bound to respect. In other words, the constitution which was framed to benefit the citizen, and protect the minority, is used for the sole advantage of the political organization that, through brute numbers, gets possession of the government.

This is not all, nor the worst. We are a republic in form, and a despotism in fact, and, while apparently a government of parties like the governments of Europe, have parties only in name, that exist without that difference of policy and principle that would justify the contention. This last comes from the fact that our cast-iron government cannot be moved by an assertion of opinion, and so all agitation of measures among the people has ceased, and while

communities of Europe are excited in the most violent manner by grave questions affecting the good or ill of humanity, our elections turn on personal abuse, and a contention that has justification for its existence only in a struggle for office between two parties that differ one from the other in nothing save names.

The evil effect of such a condition cannot be overestimated. It made you, sir, a possibility. The popular agitation of great questions educates the people, not only to a knowledge of those questions, but to recognition of statesmanship. Without such knowledge the people are blind, and fail to discern the difference between the man who leads and teaches, and is marked as a statesman, and the man who follows and flatters that he may be fed, and is, in fine, a mere politician. To use a homely comparison, it is the difference between the driver of the wagon and the little dog under it. The driver directs, the dog follows, and he dare not swerve to the one side or the other lest the wheels crush him : he dare not rush forward for fear the horses' heels may dash out his brains.

You, sir, coarse, ignorant, cunning, and conceited, are the embodiment of the popular politician. If you ever had a generous impulse, you have kept it under remarkable control. If you are possessed of a conviction, you have concealed it so effectually that no one ever suspected you of the possession. To the mere politician, impulses and convictions are dangerous attributes. With the people nearly equally divided in two hostile camps, there is illustrated a peculiar weakness of humanity that loses in an organization itself the purpose for which it was organized. In this way sects fight to the bitter end for a religion they no longer understand or believe in, and while an average Republican cannot tell you why he is a Republican save that he is not a Democrat, and a Democrat will make the same reasonable response, the two parties have been on the verge of civil war, and may yet destroy, through violence, the government for which they contend. The great effort is to gain votes, and, as opinions are apt to offend, there is a careful avoidance of their expression. Delegate Flanagan embodied the fact in one sentence, when, with much profanity, he asked the Chicago Convention, "If we are not here for the offices what in the — are we here for?" At the convention which nominated McClellan for the Presidency, after the late Vallandingham, of Ohio, had spoken for an hour on the principles

of democracy, a shrewd politician said : "Mr. President, I have been in politics all my life, and I have learned that principles are very good when we can make votes by them, and—bad when we cannot, and, sir, democratic principles just now are unpopular."

As there is no other difference between the parties than that made by possession of the offices, there is no reason why a party once in power may not remain in power through all time. It may put in practice any policy; sustain any measures without question. There is not, for example, one principle recognized by the Republican Party that has ever been submitted to the people, or been discussed from the stump. Money has come to be the main factor in elections, while an army of office-holders reinforced by a like army from the State organizations, contend against an army of office-seekers, reinforced in like manner, and the party which is deposed from power goes out through some convulsion quite beyond the control of the politicians. Had not the South appealed to arms in 1861, the democracy would have continued to possess the government. That appeal made the people of the North the Republican Party, and had that party in its reconstruction measures appealed to the governing element of the South, that happened to be the enlightened whites, instead of to the ignorant and debased slaves, that party would be in power to-day. As it was, the carpet-bagger, bayonet and negro, made the solid South democratic, and the hard times of '73 wrested so many northern States from the Republicans that the Democratic Party was amazed to find itself with a two-thirds majority in the House—elected its president, and now has House and Chief Magistrate its own.

When this change occurred it was hoped if not expected that the party, so called to power, in the House, would attempt, at least, to reform the abuses practiced by its predecessor. Possessed of the House with a two-thirds majority, it was thought by men yet troubled with a belief that parties are based on certain doctrines, or as they are popularly called principles, to sanction which they were organized, that a demonstration made in the direction of reform would be a powerful appeal to the people in behalf of the democracy. This was met with a clamorous warning that it would not do to threaten the business of the country. The business thus threatened meant the class legislation that, without sanction from the people, had fastened itself upon the

vitals of the country. It was an ingenious process through which, under a thin pretext of fostering home industry, capital alone was fostered—a proceeding that brought the heavy weight of the government into the field of private enterprise, and while favoring a few oppressed the many. This business of the country meant a recognition of monopolized wealth that has put all the transportation of a continent into the hands of a few men ; the telegraph into the hands of one man only ; farmed out the financial agency of the government to two thousand corporations, to use as their selfish greed might dictate ; turned our public domain over to other corporations, and in a word established a process through which the infamous relation between capital and labor that has cursed Europe for centuries became the rule at home, and, while widening the gulf between the very rich and the very poor, starved millions while it fostered millionaires.

Among the members of Congress who cherished the fond belief that the democracy had in it yet the old spirit of life that made its traditions famous ; that told of Jefferson, its father, and of Jackson, its patron saint, was Michael C. Kerr, of Indiana. A hard student, of more than ordinary intellect, and with a courage sustained by the most ardent enthusiasm, he was a reformer. His election as Speaker stimulated to active life the few members who believed that the signal for a fresh departure had been sounded, and war against legalized wrong begun. Alas, it was soon learned that Kerr owed his success to the fact that he was the choice of Indiana, and the solid South recognized in Indiana a necessary ally to it in wiping out the infamous reconstruction policy that was meant to make an Ireland, or a Poland, of that section. It was soon demonstrated that the democracy of the House meant only the democracy of the South, and, reasonable and praiseworthy as its action was, it stopped far short of the reform called for by the sufferings and necessities of the country.

You, sir, identified yourself with this South, and headed the mass of democratic imbeciles who trembled at the mere term, “business interests.” On the lamented death of Michael C. Kerr, you were made Speaker, and organized the House in a manner to stifle all investigation, and choke down any utterance sounding in sympathy with the people, or showing discontent at their suffering condition. It was a reign of fear, and the Democratic members walked the floor, speaking with bated breath, like a convoca-

tion of undertakers, afraid to speak lest a noise might disturb the proprieties that rule about a corpse.

The democracy continued the work of its odious predecessors, while the government, put on a war footing during the struggle of a great civil conflict, remained as the war made it. You kept up a vociferous cry of economy, which meant cutting down appropriations at one term to be supplemented by a deficiency bill at another, and, while apparently restricting these appropriations, you left the expenditures precisely where you found them. When all was done, the net result was the utter starvation of a few wretched clerks.

To hold you responsible for this result, the natural outgrowth and development of a government so far removed from popular control (as I have shown) as to cease to be at all representative, is not just. But an event occurred during your reign as Speaker, at once grave and deplorable, for which you have more individual responsibility than any man engaged in the treason. Samuel J. Tilden, democratic candidate for president, was elected over Rutherford B. Hayes, his republican opponent. The shot-gun at the South had more than balanced the corrupt use of money at the North, and the democrats carried the electoral vote. To one who considers the facts, and the reasons for the same, there was not much significance in the vote or the count. In the eyes of the people, however, these had an importance that went, in its consequences, to the very foundations of our Republic. The masses believed then, as they believe now, that Samuel J. Tilden was fairly and honorably elected President of the United States. Not to sustain that result was, in their eyes, not only treason to the party, treason to the country, but a death blow to all confidence on the part of the people in their republic.

The republicans in power did not see fit to accept the result of the election, and cooked up enough bogus returns to give Rutherford B. Hayes a majority of one.

In the contention that followed, and for a brief space threatened civil war, an electoral commission was devised to adjudicate upon the issue. After a protracted hearing this court returned a judgment in the nature of a *non-suit*, that, saying the commission had no power to go behind the fraudulent returns, sent the case back to the House of Representatives as it found it.

In this way it came to you, sir, and to the body over which

the Speaker has, through its organization, such extraordinary control. Instead of counting the vote and declaring the result, at your suggestion probably, certainly through your consent, a bargain was made with the defeated party which, ignoring the voice of the people, inaugurated as President the candidate of the minority. The southern democrats saw that they could do better in a bargain with the defeated candidate than through anything the man elected could accomplish were he duly installed.

We sacrificed a million of men, devastated a large part of our vast territory, and burdened our people with a great debt in vindication of a national life that you, sir, sold not for a mess of potage but for the mere scrapings of the pot. A confidence in the ballot is the foundation stone of our political fabric, and you and your confreeres in this iniquity destroyed this foundation. The South, under your lead at Washington, did more to break down the Union than Jefferson Davis and all his hordes of armed confederates in the civil war. The self-government of the fathers, the cherished republic of the children, died in that vile trade ; for contempt has followed the loss of confidence, and the people see unmoved the reign of money and the swift rot of corruption rolling over all once revered because sacred.

And what is it all worth when done, even when done honestly and in accord with law? "Men may come and men may go but this goes on forever." The change of parties brings no change in the dull unmeaning conservatism of the so-called leaders, nor any change in a policy that made them possible. We cannot say in the language of the old diplomat, "Come hither my son and see with how little wisdom the world is governed;" for our world is governed by corporations and monopolized wealth, and the son can only see the dull conceited ignorance in office that holds our political structure to a protection of their abuses.

Finally, and to sum up, the sudden cessation of the noise and excitement pertaining to a presidential contest, when it comes to an end in the count of the vote, makes it belong to the *opera boufe*. One day we have the entire population on the eve of war. The air is heavy with imprecations, and fingers tingle to get at throats. Business is suspended, and all amusements are forgotten for this saving of the land through the freeman's exercise of the ballot. The next day the frightful tumult has subsided, and the dazed

looker-on can scarcely realize that he is among the same people and in the same land.

With the stilling of this tumult, all interest in the government seems to subside. Save among the office-holders and office-seekers there is no anxiety whatever. Let either party win, and its administration rolls on in the old ruts of its predecessors.

This is life and eminence to you, sir. What need of thought to be eminent in a government that lives without thought? What call for study of progress under a cast-iron structure that cannot move? What demand for eloquent utterances in a deliberative body that never deliberates? How eminently well fitted for leadership where no leader is required! "Among the blind the one-eyed man is king," says the old proverb. With that one eye, however dim, kept on the main chance, the king is a great success. Elected by a party that had its origin in human rights, and still retains its interest in behalf of them as against the party of privileges, you hold with the few in their plunder, temper the fierce democracy with the conservatism of wrong, and pose as a political hermaphrodite, having all the worse qualities of a man balanced on the weakness of a woman, found in that high regard for the mysterious business interests of the country.

It is an easy role to play, when once the trick is caught. It all lies in deportment. Length of legs and solemnity of countenance are the main ingredients, and when to these is added the faculty of treating opinions as deep convictions, and uttering worn-out commonplace with the earnestness of fresh discovery, we have Randallism in perfection.

A stolid Casius, solemn, slow and vain,  
Who makes in cunning all he lacks in brain;  
And shilds his weakness with a poor pretense,  
Whose owl-eyed silence covers owl-eyed sense.

It is one of your larger virtues that you seldom speak; but "me thinks," as the poet expresses it, I hear you, after rising with grave deliberation, solemnly say to a listening House with a conviction of tone that defies contradiction, "Mr. Speaker, the ocean is a magnificent object, sir"—and the announcement carries a heavy appropriation for Mr. Roach the ship builder.

ARTHUR RICHMOND.